

# Southern Voices

1989



# **SOUTHERN VOICES**

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### **Middle Men**

Men's middles grow in middle age  
Because they are stormed by the  
Irish Brigade.  
Out-couraged by John Courage,  
Bitten by the Miller,  
Played by the Irish Harp,  
They take too many trips to Newcastle  
And reach the bottom of EdelBock.  
They look under the Red F of Foster's,  
Shoot one too many times at the Moosehead,  
Kill too many Greenroosters.

But what can you expect when their  
best friend is McAndrews,  
Who has London Pride  
And lives with Cooper and Sons?

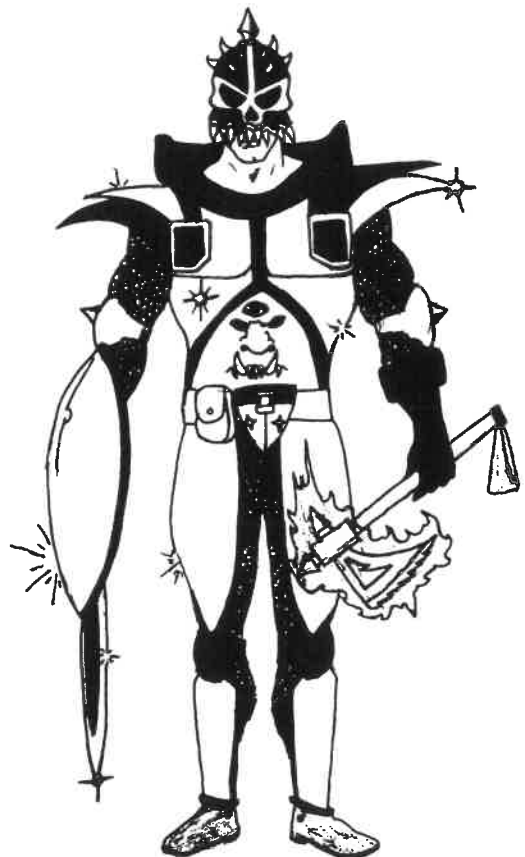
*Patricia Aust*

### **Intimations**

Snow falls to the dark, frozen ground  
Devouring trees, cars, and buildings.  
A sharp beep breaks the silence  
for a moment:

The lonely car tries to make its way  
through the thick, white blanket.  
Nature whispers death to those who dare.

*Susan Baird*



Ink Drawing

*Chris Strawbridge*

### **Southern Scene in Winter**

I look out my window and see  
a wasteland:  
Stalks once vibrant with  
Southern silk  
Stand naked,  
Dead in crusty soil,  
Stripped.

All winter long  
They stand,  
Martyrs of the summer.

Come peer with me  
through the window pane:  
See how life passes.

*Patricia Aust*  
Honorable Mention  
Poetry Contest

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### **Realization**

I sit by my window and see  
the leaves that once  
dressed the trees  
have fallen.  
They tumble with each other  
as the wind pushes them away —  
More come and pass my window;  
Children play in the piles  
that the wind forgot.  
Summer passed  
and took life and the flowers  
and the warmth of the sea.

All that is left is the cold.

*Susan Baird*

### **Beautiful Black**

I see it written in black ink on my paper:  
Black;  
the flue and blackberry jello;  
a stomach virus and black beef broth;  
Uncle Buck's black suit he wore that day  
to match his dead wife's black dress.  
The night is eternal black dotted with tiny  
bright stars;  
The black cat crosses my path and brings  
bad luck.  
Black people with black eyes, black skin.  
Goopy black Gummi bears, and sticky black  
jelly beans.  
Black witches stir their wicked brew;  
Black clothes, black make-up.  
I give my brother a black eye.  
Caterpillars have black blood.  
Black is eternal;  
Black is dark;  
Black is beautiful;  
Black.

*Donya Creel*  
First Place  
Poetry Contest

### Love

Love is a flame —  
If ignored, it will dwindle  
Until not even a spark remains.  
But if fed, it will burn and grow,  
And the world will feel  
Its glow.

*Kevin Gillespie*

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### Fragments

As I trudge up the ladder  
I hope and wish and pray I'll make it;  
A glance down brings the pacifist out,  
A glance up destroys his credibility.  
I get to the platform and Scott is there,  
Puffing on a Camel, laughing at my fear.

Just as I have done a thousand times,  
I think of you and hope and wish and pray  
You'll never let me go  
Like Scott and I did the melons  
Off the water tower one day.

*Brian Kloss*

### December

Mother Nature blankets the sky with a  
Sheet of gray.  
Thick, black smoke from chimneytops ascends  
While snow descends.  
Harsh Northern winds slap your face with  
Cold, cold hands.  
The chill numbs your body like a strong  
Anesthetic.  
The sun never shines, the dark never leaves.

This is December.

*Robert Guerzon*



Ink Drawing

*Chris Strawbridge*



### Of Toiling and Reaping

Opening the door to the barn  
I catch a whiff of the animals  
Slumbering on soft hay.

Making my way to the loft  
I see a calf cuddled  
With its mother with no  
Concerns or fears.

I ponder my own worries:  
Something to eat  
Somewhere to stay  
Someone to love  
And envy the animals  
Slumbering on hay.

*Donnie Cook*

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### American Gothic

The old man and his wife  
Been workin' the farm all their life,  
Livin' on his daddy's land,  
No one to help, no farm hands.  
He looks straight ahead with a blank stare —  
Slowly balding, losin' hair;  
Lookin' away into space,  
She has a sadness in her face.  
Standin' straight, pitchfork in hand,  
They've worked all their lives  
To farm this land.

*Robert Guerzon*

### Loss

An American farmer  
looks at what he has lost:  
The seas of grain  
that weathered storms born of wind;  
The woodframe house  
built with his two hands;  
The big red barn  
that burned down last summer,  
Rebuilt with the love  
of neighbors.  
His way of life:  
blood, sweat, and toil,  
Then evenings under the magnolia,  
and lemonade.  
The bulldozer tears down  
the woodframe house and the  
big red barn.

An American farmer  
looks at what he has lost.

*Brian Kloss*



## light

as the dark of night becomes the light of day, so my love for life springs forth and lets itself be known; gradually, hopefully. i open my heart to the world and wait anxiously for it to enter the depths therein and explore alone, uninterrupted. i am love.

i feel the wind on my face; i see the light that surrounds those who surround me; i, too, wish for this light in hopes that it will guide me through another day; i hope to find someone else who can see this light; i hope to find someone to share this light with. i am the light.

i become one with the earth. i am the lightning that speaks; i am the thunder that answers. i am the sun beaming down upon those who cannot or do not have the light of love to give. i am the light; i am love.

*Angela Lang*

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### Linguistic Mathematical Analysis

Functions never heard  
like **cosh** and **sinh**  
**hyperbolic tangent** or  
the **transcendental**  
**exponential** expression  
of  $e^x$  and the  
drone of **differential**  
**calculus** or **D.E.**  
**logarithms** and **ellipses**  
**conic cuts** of all kinds  
all jumble in my mind's book of  
**analytical geometry**  
echo endlessly through the infinite  
expanses of my subconscious  
mind

*Aubrey Knight*

### An Unfinished Poem

Decrescendo brings us down  
To soft soothing tones;  
Piano keeps us there;  
A crescendo brings us back  
To life:  
Pizzicato

*Donnie Cook*



Charcoal Drawing

*Michael Dudley*

## The Gift

The woman must have been about 60. I was showing Mrs. Carson a diamond pendant when I saw her out of the corner of my eye. She stood over in the corner, pretending to look at the class ring display, until Mrs. Carson left. But even then she'd only glance at me once in a while. I decided to go see if I could help her with something. She looked around the store to see if anyone was watching and then quietly reached into her old brown leather bag and brought out a wedding ring. I could tell that it was old and hadn't been cared for. Nicks and scratches covered the outside of the ring and there was a little bent place around the edge.

"I want to get this ring made bigger. My husband's in prison and I just want to give him something nice for Christmas. He can't wear it no more; it only goes halfway down his pinkie."

We resize rings all the time, but the way it sounded, that ring would need to be stretched three or four whole sizes. I told the lady I'd be right back, and I went to the workroom to get Mr. Estes. He is the owner of the jewelry store and the fashion store right beside it, plus about eight or nine more buildings around the square that he rents out. Some say he's the richest man in Houston and argue about how much money he actually has. They don't even come close.

Mr. Estes walked over to the ring counter where the old lady stood and asked how he could help her. She gave him the whole story about her husband again.

"What's his finger size?" Mr. Estes asked. I could tell he was hoping she wouldn't want it stretched that much, because it would break easily; it was so thin. Just the other day he tried to stretch a \$1000 ring for Mr. Furr and it broke. Mr. Furr stood right over there in the same place the old lady's at and yelled at Mr. Estes for thirty solid minutes. Mr. Estes never hollered back. He's always been such a quiet man: nothing ever gets to him much — I've never once seen him mad.

The old lady didn't know her husband's ring size, of course.

"Just stretch it a little at a time so I can look and see if it's big enough." She looked hopefully at Mr. Estes, who took the ring from her small, wrinkled hands.

"Now, I can't stretch it much, or it's liable to snap," he warned. "Are you willing to risk it?"

"The ring ain't doing him no good now," she reasoned. "I know it might pop, but I got to try it, 'cause I can't get him nothin' else."

She wrung her hands together, her eyes following Mr. Estes' every footstep until he disappeared through the door. She looked at me and started talking.

"Been married to my husband forty-six years. He's been in prison for twenty of 'em, though. He knows he did wrong, and I still love him — I go to see him at least once a week. Lately he's been real discouraged and I want to give him something special for Christmas."

Just then Mr. Estes came back in.

"I brought it up a size and a half. Look at it and see if it's big enough."

She took the old ring and looked at it, held it up in the air, and finally slid it over her own finger.

"Still too little," she decided. "Maybe another size'll do it."

Mr. Estes reminded her that there was a chance of it popping. She wrung her hands again, but she told him to go ahead. He took it back to the workroom, and this time I followed him.

"Do you think you can get it big enough?" I asked. I sounded like the old woman. The ring was looking a little thin; I tensed every time he stretched it.

"This should be plenty," he said at last. "I'm scared to try it any more."

Mr. Estes took the ring from the sizer, fixed up a cleaning solution, and dropped the old band into it. He waited a few minutes, took it out of the solution, and told me to finish polishing it.

"But the woman just wanted it stretched. She can't afford to have it cleaned, too."

"Go ahead and finish doing it while I go explain that I've stretched it all I'm going to try."

I put some extra effort into fixing up the ring, and tried to cover the scratches as best as I could. Pretty soon it gleamed — almost like a new one. Then I decided to gift wrap it for her. I looked over to the shelf where we keep the ring boxes, and picked up a cheap plastic one, the kind the \$19.95 birthstone rings go in.

While I was pulling paper from the roll, Mr. Estes walked back in. He saw the box I had, and reached for one of the most expensive ones, with red felt in it and Estes Jewelry embossed on the inside top.

"Put it in this," he said quietly.

I wrapped the box and put an Estes Jewelry sticker on it, and Mr. Estes took it back to the old lady.

"I think he'll be able to wear it," he said. He handed it to her.

The old woman reached up into her beat-up leather bag, but Mr. Estes' voice stopped her.

"No charge." He walked to the back of the store real quick and shut the door.

*Donnie Cook*  
First Place  
Short Story Contest

### **Straightness**

Where does straightness come from?  
From the tiles in the floor and ceiling,  
From the edge of a skyscraper  
Pointing toward sky.  
From a Kansas road  
Stretching on, stretching on.  
From a line of soldiers.  
In funeral faces.

*Donnie Cook*

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### **Of Snow and Sun**

Through a frosted pane  
I see a world gone white  
From grass to house to tree;  
And in this carpet I catch  
The tracks of bluejays,  
Cardinals, and stalking cats.  
The neon-nosed boy  
Watches the squirrels  
Play tag in the gnarled oak  
Whose bark mirrors white,  
Whose cracks and crags pile  
Deep with snow.

But when I glance again,  
I see the sun -  
And the world begins  
To weep.

*Aubrey Knight*  
Honorable Mention  
Poetry Contest

### **(Kool!)**

This word sounds cool!  
Every time something  
Good or even crazy happens,  
Someone will say,  
"Kool!"  
Some dude asked me,  
"Can I use your computer  
tonight?"  
I said, "I don't care."  
Dude said,  
"Kool!"  
When Ahmad Rashad asked  
Phylicia Ayers-Allen  
To marry him and she said,  
"Yes," he said,  
"I'm cool, I'm cool!"  
This word is so cool,  
Even celebrities use it  
In their names, like  
Kool and the Gang,  
L.L. Cool J, and  
Kool Moe Dee.  
That's not weird,  
That's KOOL!

*Julian Presley*

## The Cigarette Man

The man at the window handed me my ticket. I picked up my luggage and headed for the bench already filled with saggy-eyed travelers. I put my luggage down at the end of the bench and sat on it. The air was unusually cold for mid-December. Even my three-layered clothing didn't keep me warm. A white cloud formed in front of my face when I breathed. I rubbed my hands together, then breathed warm air into them.

"Wanna smoke?" asked the man next to me.

"No, thanks, I don't smoke." The man shrugged his shoulders and lit up his own cigarette.

A huge bus marked, "GREYHOUND," pulled up in front of us. Everyone sighed and mumbled sentence fragments of relief. We put our luggage in the luggage compartment and boarded the bus one by one.

I had a window seat next to the cigarette man. He was still puffing on his cigarette. I sat down in my seat. The bus was extremely warm compared to the outside cold. With a loud grunt and a huge sigh, the bus was off.

"Sure you don't wanna smoke?"

"Positive." I turned my head to go to sleep. Maybe if I slept he wouldn't bother me with the cigarette question. The last thing I needed was to pick up that bad habit.

I looked out the window. The dreary scenery had me nearly hypnotized into a deep sleep when the cigarette man broke my trance.

"Where you headed, stranger? Goin' home for the holidays?"

"Yes." I said nothing more than that for fear he might keep talking. He kept on, anyway.

"Say, what state you from, kid?"

I shot him a sharp glance and hesitated, "Uh, Mississippi."

"Oh, yeah? Well, I'll be darned! I got some kin folk lives in Mississippi! 'Fact, that's where I grew up!" He said this with such enthusiasm I thought he was going to jump out of his seat.

"Really? That's nice." I was trying to be polite, but the scraggly old man was really beginning to annoy me.

"Yep, good ole Poplarville." His voice trailed off as if he knew he had lost my attention.

I surprised even myself when I sat up quickly to this remark.

"Did you say Poplarville? That's where I'm from!" I felt an excited chill rush through my body. Ever since I came to MIT in September, I hadn't once met anyone from Mississippi — let alone Poplarville.

"Well, hot dog! Ain't that somethin'! Well, tell me

somethin' —" He was cut off as the bus screeched to a halt at a service station. Everyone was instructed to get a bite to eat, walk around a bit, and use the bathroom since this was the last stop until Memphis. We were only in Indiannapolis — only one third of the way.

Everyone got off the bus single file and did their business. It was only twenty minutes until we were all seated on the bus again. The cigarette man had replenished his stock of cigarettes. He took one out and lit it up. He knew better than to ask me if I wanted one.

He was definitely an old man — probably in his sixties. He had a head full of white hair and a half-full white beard. His skin was wrinkled, red, and had brown splotches on it. His clothes were a little ragged.

They looked like they'd been patched more than a few times. He had on steel-toe leather work boots. I knew they were steel-toes because my daddy wears them, and the toe is the only part that doesn't wrinkle with age and use of the boot. He broke my train of thought by starting up another conversation.

"Who're your kin folk in Poplarville?"

"Do you know Jesse and June Smith? They're my grandparents on my mother's side."

He thought about it for a few seconds. "Jesse Smith. . . Oh! Do you mean Jesse Turner Smith?"

"Yes, you know him?"

"Yeah! I graduated with him in '42! Hey, do you know Cecil Stewart or Bud Owen?"

"Well, yeah! They're friends of my grandfather's!"

"Ain't this somethin'! I tell ya, I never woulda guessed to meet somebody from home! What're you doin' up here anyhow, kid?"

"Oh, I'm going to college at MIT."

"Good, good. That's good. Yep, I went to college once — Montgomery State College in Alabama. Didn't stay but two days, though. Learnin' books just ain't what I was after. I wanted me some adventure, so I came to Chicago. You make good grades?"

I found myself telling the cigarette man more than I thought I would. "Yes, I guess. It's tough to do good, though."

"Yeah. Hey, what's your name, kid? I'm kinda tired o' callin' you 'kid'."

"Krystal Smith. What's yours?"

"Charlie O'Brien."

We talked for the next few hours about home, family, and friends. We stopped in Memphis for a pitstop. Next stop — Jackson.

After settling back on the bus, we both realized we were pretty tired.

"Hey, Miss Krystal, how 'bout us gettin' some

sleep? I'm awful tired after talkin' and ridin' s'much. Old fella like me needs some rest — young folks, too."

"Yeah, I was about to say the same thing. I'm pretty tired myself. Good night, Charlie."

"G'night, Miss Krystal."

We were about four hours from Jackson. Before I fell asleep I thought about Charlie and what his life must have been like in rural Poplarville, Mississippi. He had told me he was a farmer's kid. His family had a medium-sized farm out on Old Highway 11. They owned cows, horses, chickens, and dogs. His father made enough money to get by, and that was all he and his family needed. But Charlie had no more family. While he was away at college, some big-city men who wanted to build a factory on his father's land set the whole place on fire. Charlie's father wasn't about to sell the land he and his wife and kids had put their roots on, and he paid for it with all their lives.

Charlie quit college and went away to Chicago to seek his fortune. He worked odd jobs to make enough money to rent a room to live in at a sleazy motel; he wasn't into cardboard boxes. He had just received word that he had a nephew and a whole bunch of relatives, and they invited him home for Christmas. This would be his first time back home since 1945. He didn't even know he had any kin folks left; they must have been kids of his sister who got thrown out when their father found out she was pregnant by a city boy — she was only fourteen.

The bus screeched to a halt, and we made another one of our routine pitstops. Soon we were back on the bus for a three and a half hour drive to Poplarville.

Not much was said on the last stretch of the trip. My thoughts turned to my own family, and my heart started pounding faster. Only three and a half more hours, and I could see them again.

I couldn't sleep for thinking and trying to figure out what my presents would be, but poor old Charlie slept like a baby. He looked peaceful with his eyes closed; when he snored, he sounded like my father. I watch-

ed him for a long time, then finally I drifted off to sleep.

"Last stop, Poplarville! All those for Poplarville!" The loud voice of a man abruptly woke me up.

"Hey, Charlie. Charlie, wake up." I gently nudged him until his eyes opened, "We're here, Charlie. Wake up."

His tired old body stood up and straightened up, as did my tired young body.

"Well, Miss Krystal, it looks like this is it. Maybe I'll look ya up sometime over the holidays."

"Yeah. Yeah, Charlie, you do that — look me up." I smiled, and he smiled back.

We got off the bus and went our separate ways.

My parents' house was across town, but Poplarville isn't very big, so I walked. I walked through one subdivision to get to Main Street. Then I walked straight across the tracks, through the quarters, past the elementary school, to the beginning of the white section in the eastern part of town.

My house was the first one in the white section, about a quarter of mile out of city limits. I stood at the end of the horseshoe-shaped driveway next to the mailbox my father had built from an empty acetylene tank and a tin mailbox. I saw the naked pecan trees, the hunting dogs, the smoke rising from the chimney. A warm tingling sensation ran through my body as I hurried to the house.

I set my luggage down and went inside. There were people everywhere.

"Krystal! Krystal! Guess what Santa Claus brought me! Guess! Guess!" All my younger cousins ran and grabbed my legs.

After exchanging hugs, kisses, and "welcome homes," I stood in front of the fireplace staring into the fire. I wondered what kind of Christmas Charlie was having.

*Donya Creel*  
Second Place  
Short Story Contest

### When Winter Falls

I gaze out the window  
While summer winds down.  
Bright leaves demand their place on the trees;  
Brown ones drift slowly to the cluttered ground;  
Grass lacks the strength to grow tall;  
Flowers huddle up and shade themselves from cold.  
The sun is contented with a short trip across the sky.  
Squirrels forsake play:  
They work  
Storing food.  
Mocking birds and whipporwills fly away,  
Away, away.  
The menacing cooperhead no longer haunts the grass.  
Children come inside to play.

I feel a chilling sadness  
When winter  
Falls.

*Donnie Cook*  
Second Place  
Poetry Contest

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### Faces in the Mirror

Faces in the mirror never knowing a name,  
Faces in the mirror always hiding their shame,  
They reflect the light, but all I can see,  
'Cause when I look in the mirror, all I see is me;

I look in the mirror, there's an image I see,  
It looks like a man, a man just like me,  
I look at the picture and it's just not right,  
'Cause the face in the mirror is only a reflection of light;

The mirror tells a story of destruction and hate,  
It leaves you asking questions about your fate,  
The picture that you see seems so untrue,  
But the image of the mirror really is you;

When you look in the mirror it shows your life,  
It reveals your troubles and all your strife,  
You can run from the mirror, but you just can't hide,  
'Cause when you look in the mirror it becomes alive;

The mirror is a warrior who has stood the test of time,  
He can be a river, a brook, a pond, a rhyme,  
Mirrors do not lie, they tell only what's true,  
And to ourselves they reveal the real me and you.

*David Sheffield*



### Childhood: Studying War

Many men make their way along the jungle trail.  
My men wait in their hidey-holes.  
Bullets migrate to and fro as I  
Manipulate the machine gun.  
M-16's crack in a melancholy minuet;  
Fragments miss my head by mere millimeters.  
My friend dies as mortars thump and explode.  
Many men die on the jungle trail.

*Brian Kloss*

### Danger

A tiny sailboat dips in open sea;  
November swells, the size of tsunamis, swirl around;  
Harsh gusts ripple the sail;  
Fog, one mile thick, blankets the cold ocean;  
The crew of two bravely tries to guide,  
But the boat wanders into  
Nowhere. . .

*Robert Guerzon*

---

### Old Writer

"A novel, short story, essay,  
Poem, rhyme, or song."  
His mind booms and  
Catlike hands walk  
Across vellum documents,  
Leave no tracks.  
No magic remains:  
No chart topper since '68,  
No bestseller since '59.  
Fifty years in the making  
And the geyser's gone quiet.  
The tennis elbow of poets  
Freezes future fame.

*Aubrey Knight*

---

### Of Colors and Life (To MLK)

United we'd stand,  
Divided we'd fall:  
Dr. King had a dream  
To unite us all.  
All races, all peoples,  
All colors and creeds;  
He knew without unity  
The nation would bleed.

He preached **agape**  
And love of all men;  
He preached that segregation  
Was ever a sin;  
He preached that color  
Was only of skin;  
Preached God loved all things,  
Loved all colors of men.

*Curtis Muirhead*

## The Wait

A cool breeze blew in the open side of the shop and it carried a heavy smell of rain. The girl strolled through the aisles making sure everything was running all right. The hum of the motor rang in her ears along with the whooshsh sound of the paddlewheels going round and round, in the water, out of the water, keeping it flowing through the eggs. She stopped and moved a little glob from the white trough to the orange one. The day workers had moved all the eggs which had turned orange out of the new trough to the hatching one just this morning, and they would be doing it again tomorrow morning, so her effort really wasn't necessary, but she did it anyway. Now her hands were wet so she casually wiped them on her ripped up Levis that were almost as white as her Cash's shirt and began to stroll around again. She checked the aeraters in troughs 18, 19, and 21 and watched the little black fish all lumped up together at the bottom. They were just about ready to be moved up to the ponds. She poked a wire through the holes in the water pipe and unclogged the algae so that the little streams of water, all precisely three inches apart, would flow down to the newly hatched orange fish. She knew that there had to be a continual flow of fresh water over the new ones. She glanced at her watch and picked up a box of food and walked around sprinkling the right amount of food in each trough so that when they were stocked in a pond the pound per fish ratio would balance.

She climbed up the steps located on the left side and reached for the door knob and pulled it open. She then leaned over and opened the trailer door and took a footstep into the trailer. The coolness was refreshing and she smiled at the air-conditioner as she got a diet coke out of the refrigerator. A little caffeine was just what she needed. She walked from the kitchen to the other room and turned on the T.V. Then she flopped down on the couch which faced the big window that gave a complete view of the hatchery. That couch was the one that used to be in the den at Aunt Jean's house. She remembered the week after

they got it, she, Lisa, Missy, Mac, and Richie had burned a hole in the cushion playing Dark Shadows. Some weird seventies race car movie was on and she stared at her watch. It was 2:43. Great, that meant she had at least forty-five minutes to wait before Richie got back from checking the new ponds and that's if none were up.

She took another swig of diet coke and heard a rumble of thunder. She set the can down on the worn green carpet beside the couch and went to the back door. She stepped out onto the third step; they were just concrete steps that you shove up against something - the kind you just buy somewhere like Y.D. Lumber Company. The nice breeze had picked up to a pretty good wind, but it was hot. It felt like the air that blows out of the air-conditioning unit outside. She thought about Richie up on the ponds cussing the wind for blowing the oxygen out of the water. A rain sure would be nice to help cool things off, but she sure wished that it wouldn't tonight because if it rained there would be a thunder storm; if there's a thunder storm the electricity would go off. The electricity always goes off in a thunder storm because those stupid MP and L people are too cheap to fix the wires even though they charge you an arm and a leg. She really didn't want to bother with that generator tonight. She stepped back into the trailer, returned to the couch, and looked at her watch. 3:11, 19 minutes until Richie got back, 19 minutes. She caught a glimpse of lightning in the window.

"One, two, three," she whispered, like when she was a kid, until the thunder rumbled an answer. The lights flicked off, then on, and then back off. She grabbed the flashlight and headed for the door. Her short legs took the steps in one jump as she headed toward the generator. The silence was deadly. She said a small prayer as she flicked the switch and thanked God it started. She sat down in a chair and leaned her head back. This was going to be a long night.

*Patricia Aust*  
Third Place  
Short Story Contest

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## War

A violent wind does not outlast the morning;  
A squall of wind does not survive the day.  
Such is the course of Nature.  
If Nature cannot long sustain her effort,  
How much less can man?

*Chris Strawbridge*

### Permanents

They almost always  
Had names like  
Juanita, Henrietta,  
Lena; they  
Lived on cigarettes,  
Co-Colas,  
Ate Nabs between  
Customers,  
Had eyebrows penciled  
To New Jersey,  
Went home with  
Swollen ankles.  
Juanita, I see your  
Hands shrivelled from  
Neutralizers, the ash blonde  
Dye that turned  
Your fingers brown.  
Lena, you could scrub  
A scalp so clean  
My head would throb  
For hours;  
Casino quick,  
You'd deal end papers  
Stacked thin like  
Pages from old Bibles  
And never lose  
A single one —  
Not one would  
Flutter to the floor  
To the cluttered clumps  
Of hair heaped from  
Day-long cutting.  
Henrietta, I learned  
Your one lung,  
One kidney, your  
Alcoholic husband;  
I think about the way  
Your arms smelled  
Of hair spray,  
Remember how your  
Face looked  
Upside down, my head  
Going back  
On faith  
Toward the sink,  
Your fingers working  
Blessings in my  
Brain.

*Emma Richardson*

### Winter's Whispers

A cold January morning:  
Wind whispers and whistles  
When it rushes through cracks.  
Trees sway, pop, snap.  
Ice falls from abandoned branches  
Where the redbird once sang.  
Silence breaks in the light  
Crunch of ground as Winter's  
Birds search for food —  
A seed, a crumb, something  
Left behind.  
A loud screech, and the  
Neighbor's cat lunges,  
Lunges for the taste of prey.  
They are gone,  
And once again, silence.  
Ice crystals float to the ground  
Like heavy feathers.  
Again, the cold wind whispers.

*Curtis Muirhead*

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### October

October ends the beginning,  
October Begins the end.  
It ushers out summer, >  
It Drags in fall.  
Leaves transform:  
Red, brown, and orange.  
There's a frosty bite  
In the air.  
It nags your lungs,  
It Burns your skin:  
October — again,  
Again.

*David Rouch*

## He Was My Friend

The world still looks the same to Alex, all has not changed, only one life was lost. This was Josh's funeral but the mood was all wrong. The sun wasn't supposed to be shining so brightly nor was that little group from school supposed to be laughing. But Josh meant very little to most of the people at my school. I am Alex and I go to a private boarding school.

Josh was a very moody yet sweet boy, he was full of life and love but no one could see that for no one looked. His parents had never looked nor had they given anything to him in return for his respect for them. They gave him money and satisfied his physical needs with their new stereo and fancy clothes, but it was his emotional needs that needed nourishment. He needed to feel loved and supported but never had his parents shown him these feelings.

The funeral was nice enough, most of the students were there, and the graveside service would soon be over. "Ashes to Ashes." As I looked around the graveyard I saw Mr. Gravel. He must be feeling very guilty; I believe part of this was his fault. He was the very strict, industrious principal of my school, with no concern for the students and all of their problems.

Josh had always been ridiculed throughout his years here at my school. Josh was Jewish and many students here at my school were horribly prejudiced. Most of these kids were on drugs and considered extremely weird but that did not stop them from intimidating Josh for being different. Many times they had publically embarrassed Josh.

We all lived in the dorms and I knew many of the happenings that occurred down the hall in Josh's room. They took his money, played cruel jokes, and sometimes beat him up for pleasure, but Josh accepted his fate, which I believe was his first mistake.

I would see him alone in the cafeteria and sometimes talk to him. He seemed distant but very courteous. He was a kind, pacifist individual who was forced to live with the violence that overwhelmed his life. He would sometimes tell me about when he was younger and wanted to become a doctor and help heal all the many sick people, but as he got older he lost sight of his goal in all of the confusion and violence over his religion.

Sometimes he would have visible bruises on his face, bluish-black spots that could not be overlooked.

One day I talked him into going to Mr. Gravel and explain to him the situation, with the bruises he would be indebted to try to punish the guilty party. This was three weeks before that tragic night of his death. Mr. Gravel said he would have a conference with the guilty party but this never occurred because Mr.

Gravel was afraid to start trouble between that violent group and the administration.

The following day I found Josh crying in the hall outside his room. Those with the prejudice against Josh had heard about his meeting with Mr. Gravel and trashed his room, destroying all of his school books, his Bible, and the medical books that he had been studying. Pages from these books were scattered all over the room. I helped Josh clean up and tried to comfort him but there was no use; he asked me to leave and then locked himself inside his room.

That same week, I had been threatened twice and been called names such as "Jew Lover." I have to admit, these threats frightened me but I could not turn my back on Josh because he had no one, his parents never came to visit and he seldom went home.

"Dust to Dust." Steven, one of the major prejudiced guys, even now at the funeral was showing little respect. He was dressed in a black t-shirt with a skull on the front and ripped jeans. I hope one day he suffers for all the cruel things he and his clique did to Josh.

Josh, two weeks before his death, happened to be uncommonly moody and distant as I tried to talk to him. He brushed me off and I tried desperately to reach out to him. If only, at that time I could have known his plans, I would have been more persistent.

Lately Josh had begun to fail tests, skip classes, and he seemed very tired. Then one week before his death and eight days before Spring Break, Josh began to get very sick. He had developed a terrible case of pneumonia and probably other illnesses also. The day before his death, Josh began to throw up during an assembly program just before he fainted. Another guy and I took Josh to the school nurse while the other students squealed with laughter. The other guy who had helped me carry Josh went back to the assembly but I stayed in the waiting area as Josh was examined by the nurse. The nurse pronounced him a very sick child and called Mr. Gravel in to make a decision about what should be done. The nurse discovered that Josh had pneumonia mixed with bronchitis and added that it was very serious.

Next, I offered to take Josh to the hospital but Mr. Gravel told me to go back to class and that he would make the necessary arrangements for Josh. I gave Josh, who had turned very pale, a pat on the back then did as Mr. Gravel had recommended.

Later that day after school I went down to Josh's room and found the door propped open. I could hear that he was on the telephone. Then I overheard him saying "But why can't I come home? Well, okay, bye." Next I knocked lightly on his door and walked on in. I

asked him how he felt and he replied that he felt terrible. He told me that Mr. Gravel had sent him straight to his room for rest and not to a professional physician. This was unbelievable, my friend was extremely sick, and our principal would not even get him the medical help he so badly needed. I told Josh that I would go talk to Mr. Gravel, which I did, but got little accomplished.

The next day was the day on which we would leave for Spring Break. I was very excited because my parents and I had decided to ask Josh to come to my house for the holidays. As I went to his door I knocked and got no answer. It was locked, so I knocked louder. Where would Josh be this early in the morning? So I went and got the R.A. and asked him to unlock the door. He did and we entered the room.

"Return to the Earth from whence his life came." The sight I saw was more shocking and horrible than any other I had ever seen in my life. As we peered inside Josh's closet, we saw him hanging there with a tie around his neck, dead. The R.A. became frantic and finally called Mr. Gravel who called the police.

I began to cry as I saw Josh's limp body lying there on the floor as the police examined him. This school had been nothing but cruel toward him, a peaceful, selfless individual.

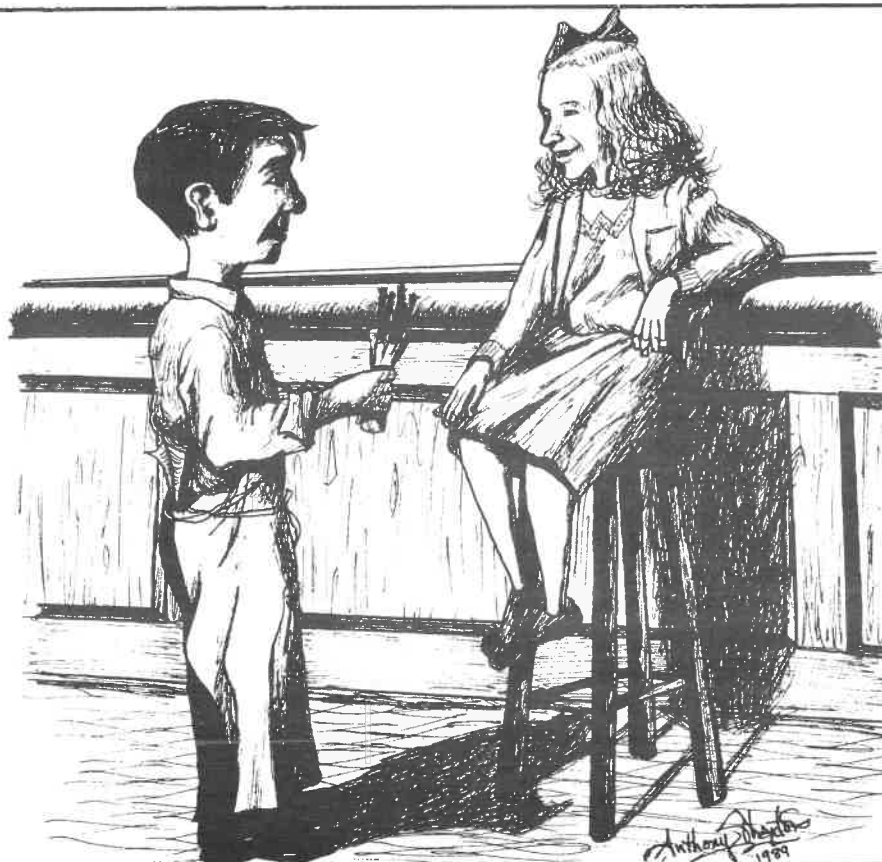
The whole school was shocked. Josh had committed suicide. But because his parents and other family members cared so little for him, it went over with little problem. No one besides me had actually

cared for Josh anyway.

As the service ended, I went back and looked across the campus for the last time. There was Mr. Gravel talking to Josh's parents, probably telling them how sorry he was. Well, whether anyone else knew or not, I did. I knew the truth of how little Mr. Gravel cared, Josh's parents cared, and how little society cared. Josh was my friend and I had believed in him. Josh's life is over now but I will never forget him or the impact he has created on my life.

Sometimes now as I think back to that time in my life, I blame myself for not seeing the signs of Josh's mental problems. I knew he was depressed and degraded, but I never knew that one could be so drastic in the depths of loneliness and despair. Josh, who only wanted peace and a chance to help those in life who were less fortunate than he, became a martyr to my life and caused me to realize the cruelty of some people in society to one who is unlike themselves. I'd like to think that Josh's death had a reason, but I can find little evidence that it did except in my life. The school is still there and so is Mr. Gravel. I pity those students who are there and do not realize what a cruel individual Mr. Gravel is. But I truly believe that somewhere inside his heart, he knows that Josh's death was partly his fault.

*Jennifer McCrory*  
Honorable Mention  
Short Story Contest



Ink Drawing

*Anthony Thaxton*

## Mindy

About a year ago, I received a puppy. I called her Mindy. I don't know why; she just seemed like a Mindy. She was half Chow and half something else, and wasn't worth anything in regard to money; in fact, I got her for just that reason. Despite all her shortcomings, she soon became my best friend.

A neighbor of mine needed me to do some work for her elderly mother. I spent a full day chopping and splitting wood for her mother's heater. In payment, I got Mindy. I considered it a fair trade. When I first got her, she was small enough to ride around in my shirt pocket. I smuggled her inside for the first couple of weeks I had her so she could sleep in my bed. Then Dad found out and stopped that. I fixed up an old shed outside for her to use in case of rain or frost.

Mindy had the fuzzy, bear-look of most Chows. However, her hair was shorter than most because her father was a German Shepherd. She was cinnamon-red colored and had a black tongue. Since the Chow had been developed as a fighting dog, she was very strong and smart. She had huge feet and short, perky ears. Many people asked me where in the world I found a short-haired Chow.

My fondest memories of last summer were of helping Mindy learn the ways of the canine world. We had a garden and she soon learned to help herself to any of the fresh vegetables by pulling them off the vine. Again, until Dad found out. Then I taught her how to get into the house. I spent a couple of hours one day putting her feet on the screen door and teaching her how to push it, let it bounce open, and stick her nose in the crack to force the door open.

We often went running and exploring out in the open fields and the woods. She learned about rabbits and squirrels and all of the other wonders of nature. I would walk with her down to a pond near the house and she would jump in, splash around, and make a general mess of everything.

This dog was the fastest eater I have ever seen. I could take out a bowl of dog food and it would be gone before it hit the ground. She would inhale it. She would also eat anything that she saw me eat. She thought she was a human. She would eat watermelon, Jell-O, grapes, **anything** I ate. I've told you how she would take tomatoes, squash, and corn from the garden. She soon learned how to take wild blackberries from their brambles without getting hurt and how to break open eggs we could find in the wild. Because of her eating habits, Mindy grew fast. Since her father had been a German Shepherd, she was pretty big. We would begin to play rough - me running and she chasing me until she could jump on my back and tackle me.

She was the center of attraction wherever I took her. People would fall in love with her instantly at the

vet's office, the park, wherever. She would never cooperate with a leash, but she would always stay right beside me when we were someplace strange to her.

She was by best friend. I could tell her all of my problems and she would, of course, listen silently. It always made me feel better. She became closer to me than all but one of my "friends." I can honestly say that she made that the best summer of my life. When I began preparations to go away to school, I made all kinds of arrangements for her happiness in my temporary absence.

They were not necessary.

One night my best friend, Joel, and I decided to go spend the night at his house. I got packed up, said good-night to Mom, Dad, and Shane (my little brother), and went outside to leave. I said good-bye to Mindy and we left. I had a great time that night. Joel and I stayed up until 3 o'clock that morning watching movies and we finally left to come back the next afternoon after a day of tennis.

We were in Joel's car. When we drove up into my driveway, I expected Mindy to be sitting there up on a little hill like she always had been when I arrived. When she wasn't there I assumed she was off running around with Shane. When I went inside, everything was just a little too quiet. Shane was there. I went to my room to drop my bags and had already pieced the puzzle together when Mom let herself in.

She told me what had happened. That morning Dad had gotten ready for work as usual. He went outside, petted Mindy, and got in his truck to go on to work. I don't know what made her do it, but Mindy tried to follow him. By the time Dad saw her it was too late. She had run along beside the truck out into the road. A car coming from the other direction never had a chance to stop.

It was really strange. One of my best friends had died and I felt nothing. I went back into the living room and watched an episode of ALF. Somebody had warned Joel and there was no conversation. When the show was over, Joel had to leave to go home. Mom asked if anyone wanted to go out to eat. Everyone ended up going except me.

When they pulled out of the drive, I went outside. I walked over to the pet cemetery (the place where every previous family pet had been buried). There was no evidence of a fresh grave. They had taken her off instead of burying her. That's when I cried. I couldn't hold back any longer. I stumbled back inside, screaming. After I had let all my agony out, I composed myself. The family got back and I was back to normal. I haven't cried over anything since that night. Good-bye, Mindy.

*Chris Jackson*

### How to Fly

Place yourself on a swing,  
The chains become wings.  
Hold on tight as you push off with might;  
Push it, push it, higher you go;  
The air becomes cool as the breezes flow,  
Now, let the chains go —  
Flying, flying, so . . .  
Fly without planes — it's fun —  
Go faster, farther,  
Jump for the Sun!

*Julian Presley*

### Cherokee

Forced from their homeland,  
They had nowhere to go:  
Their homes  
Became a playground for a new country.  
To Native Americans,  
The Old West brought despair —  
To frontiersmen, prosperity and wealth.  
They stuck together, though,  
Bands around thick black hair,  
Riding off on their horses to who knew where;  
People who wanted peace.

*Kristie Thomas*

## THE PECKLESS DRIVER



*Robert Guerzon*



## Shadow Creek Pond

In my constant wanderings through the woods of Alabama last summer, I chanced upon a quiet corner of a stand of trees. This particular stand of trees had a small brook running through it which fed a tiny pond. I took it upon myself to name my private little retreat, and I named it Shadow Creek Pond. Whenever I seemed to have trouble putting my life together, I retreated to Shadow Creek Pond and simply sat down on my personal fallen log. The act of going to this remote corner of the woods seemed to lift my soul. It was my observation that three factors contributed to the uplifting powers of this refuge. These three factors were the serenity of the area, the pure chaos of it all, and the return to my primal senses as crutches instead of my intellect.

The serenity of Shadow Creek Pond as a whole affected my outlook on life. The quiet crystal surface of the pond seemed to mirror and sympathize with my state of mind. The creek appeared to whisper that all was well and that nothing was worth torturing myself over. The near-silent rustling of the dead leaves that always covered the forest floor constantly stroked my brow. The neat, precise rings that rippled outward if an object touched the clear, glass-like surface taught me the lesson of causes and effects. That is, the ripples caused by one little action affected everything associated directly or indirectly with the cause.

The utter chaos of the woods helped me to put my life back together. The force of nature demonstrated

that there is no order in life. The winds uprooted the strongest oaks, but these same winds left the smallest saplings untouched. The trees were not all in neat, straight rows. The creek did not flow in a perfectly straight line. This taught me that without chaos, life was not life. Without chaos, life was a program, as dull as any computer. I soon learned that no one could ever accurately predict anything as an absolute.

The stark reliance on my senses I experienced during my days spent at Shadow Creek Pond calmed my mind and relieved my tension. Since I did not depend on my intellect, my mind was free to roam as it pleased. There was something almost magical about the air that made me forget about my problems. The forest floor always smelled like fresh rain. The various trees and bushes left the scent of sweet gum and cut grass. The birds' constant chatter filled my head with music. The squirrels' and foxes' rustling movements tickled my ears.

My days spent at Shadow Creek Pond were the calmest and most thoughtful days of my life. My little retreat had an extremely profound effect on my life. It taught me how to retreat to my senses when I had problems. It also taught me to use that retreat as a chance to calm myself. It was to my advantage that I learned these lessons then, because now the Shadow Creek Pond is dead. An oil drill and tank sit on its grave.

*Chris Strawbridge*



Charcoal Drawing

BW'89  
*Blake Weathersby*



Ink Drawing

*Anthony Thaxton*

### **Straightness**

From curves, circles,  
Swirls, and shapes,  
Straightness comes.  
From flattening, turning,  
Squishing, and mashing,  
Straightness comes.  
Out of corners, doors,  
Connections, squares,  
Straightness comes.  
Below and above meet:  
Straightness comes.

*Allison Tyson*

### **Jungle Law**

My window squares a jungle:  
Waxy emerald leaves perpetually drip  
A pure, wet dew that can only form  
In this forest.  
Farther out, I hear the lord of the jungle  
Continue his reign of terror,  
Furthering the way of the wild.  
This is the law of the jungle:  
(Listen, it tells no lies.)  
Surely the weak shall perish,  
And only the strong survive.

*Chris Strawbridge*

## Relations of Selfishness, Slavery, and War

Ralph Ellison, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Ambrose Bierce demonstrated concerns about selfishness, slavery, and war. In *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison depicted disregard for others and concern only for oneself in the abusive treatment of the invisible man. In "The Slave's Dream," Longfellow described the mental anguish of slavery and the vast difference between slavery and freedom. Ambrose Bierce's "Chickamauga" tells how the two sides in the Civil War so ruthlessly fought each other, and how a deaf, mute boy haphazardly discovered the effects of war. Their concerns about selfishness, war, and slavery are important because they deal with how man has unfairly treated his fellows through his selfishness.

The invisible man (in the story of the same name) met with many difficulties. Persons on the street would bump into him unwittingly, not noticing him at all. Men used him, at a party — made him watch a stripper, fight in a brutal free-for-all, and climb on an electrified carpet for money. At times, others perceived him as invisible — or, rather, did not see him — and bumped his ideas, and smashed apart his concerns. When he was visible, however, it was only for as long as others wanted to use him for their own desirous goals. When they got through using the invisible man, and he began his speech, they ignored him, assuming haughtily that his ideas and thoughts would have no effect on anything, and that the invisible man must "Know his place at all times." The men held a very self-centered view in this respect. When the men didn't listen to him, it was as if they were saying, "We know what is best; you could, therefore, not possibly know." The men denied the invisible man his very existence, supposing that his ideas could never be of any consequence. Selfishness dominated the actions of the men at this time.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, in his poem, "The Slave's Dream," showed concern about the enslaving of the blacks of Africa, and depicted it to be wrong by describing the homeland the slaves had been forced to leave. The character in the poem had been a king in Africa, free to roam among the people and throughout the land. His was a land of beauty and liberty, a good and glorious place. The slavers changed that, however. They went to Africa, captured the royal king in his jungle, and put his wrists in manacles, physically enslaving his body for life. Longfellow was concerned about the effects of slavery, as can be shown through his description of the slave lying down in the field after a long day's toil to dream about his homeland, and then, pressured by the austerity of the slavers, to let go of his life and

die. Through the dream, the author showed that the slavers could never chain the minds of their captives, but the slavers still had stolen the slave from his homeland and made him work, against his will, for their own selfish desire.

In "Chickamauga," Ambrose Bierce stated concern about war and reactions to war. The main character was a deaf and mute boy, who symbolized the public's inability to perceive the reality of war. The author led the boy on through the woods until he came to a spot where he slept. The child did not wake during an ensuing battle; this could denote the public's naivety about death and destruction. Yet, when the boy got home, the death of his family and destruction of his home hit him hard, like a staggering epiphany. The author seemed to think that members of the general public do not care about war, or at least shut the feelings of it out, unless the war actually affects them. The boy's deafness and muteness symbolized a certain stubbornness, a certain selfishness, that prevents people from realizing the perils and devastation of war until it hits home.

By now, a singular concept can be drawn from the three works to explain the existence of them all. This concept is selfishness, as best described by Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. It is the selfish nature of people that causes them to ignore the concerns, ideas, or rights of others. The men trampled the ideas of the invisible, and viewed him as nothing. The slave in "The Slave's Dream" was dreadfully violated. How could one keep captive another and not think once about the torment and anguish the slave is experiencing? The slavers must have so extensively developed their narcissism, or their selfishness, so that the very concept of another thinking, feeling human being would be instantly rejected. Another aspect of selfishness is shown in "Chickamauga." The boy symbolized those who ignored the idea of war, to the point of utter disregard for those affected by it. It was only when the boy lost his family and home that his eyes saw the horrors of war; this symbolized that people were selfish enough not to care about the tragedy of others. However, when the tragedy struck home, their cries of help combined with and intensified those that they had for so long ignored. Selfishness is the root of the three problems; the concerns that the three authors expressed about selfishness, slavery, and war can all be traced back to the first.

*Rob Ellis*

**Birthday Month: To A Poet's Parents**

Windy clouds linger  
In the deep blue sky;  
Colorful leaves dance and fly  
On a cool October day like  
A rainbow thrown madly  
To a canvas;  
Migrating birds stare with  
Amazement at this painted Earth;  
Autumn air is crisp as  
Mountain water.

The creatures of the land  
Become still once more  
In the security and peace  
Of rainbow October.

*Julian Presley*  
Third Place  
Poetry Contest

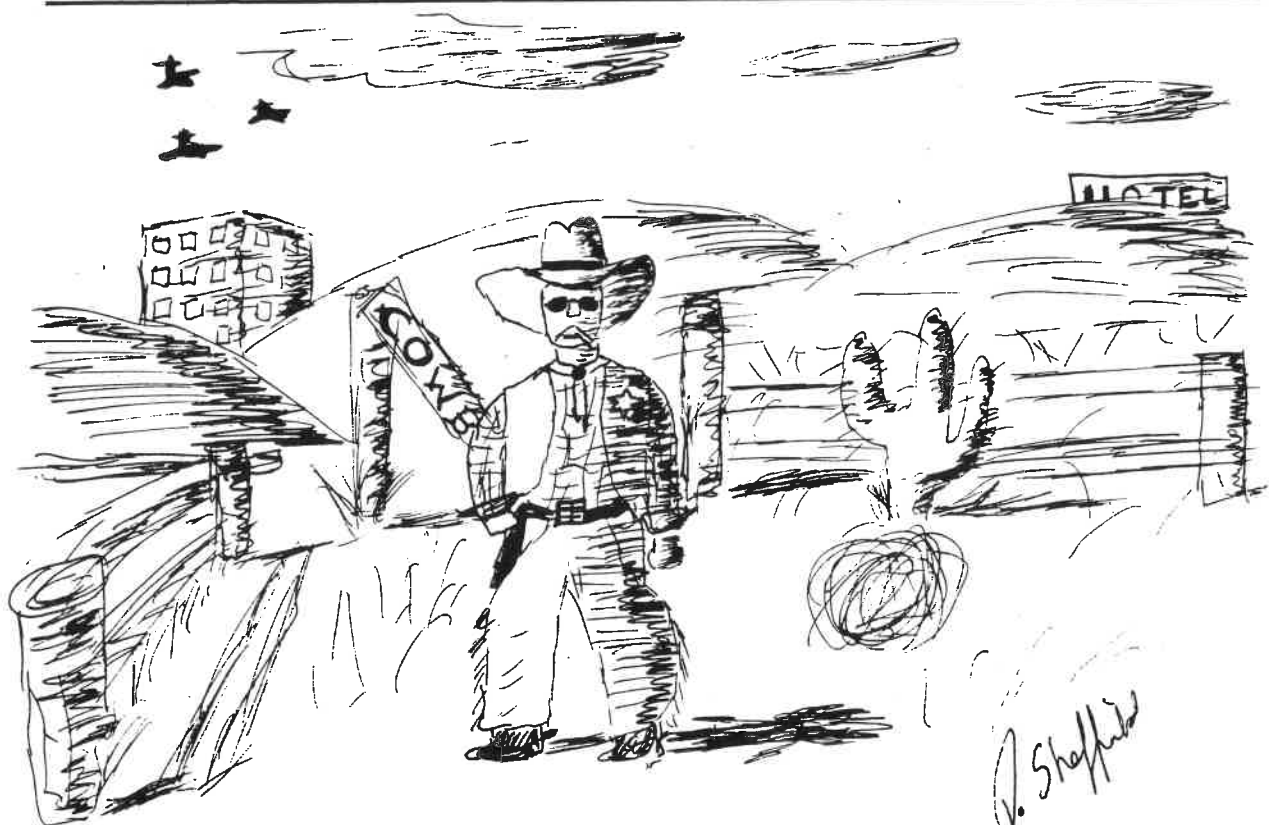
**Storm Song**

The wind howls a lowing sigh  
Which tears the oaks  
And rocks the boats  
And makes the children cry.

The winds come out  
With power and clout  
And give the clouds their form.  
The clouds by day  
Dance and play,  
But by night they brew the storm.

The men of old,  
Though strong and bold,  
Took the storm as bane.  
And while they speak  
It makes them weak,  
Their powers ebb and wane.

*Chris Strawbridge*



Ink Drawing

*David Sheffield*

## Cherokee

Hunting Wolf sat under his rock and prayed to his god, the wolf god. Every Cherokee had a special place to prepare for a battle. Hunting Wolf's place was under a large boulder that outcropped on a hill. There he sat in the shade and prayed and sharpened his weapons. He struck flint on his tomahawk, put a new head on his spear, and he honed his hard stone knife. Then he put on his colors. In the morning sun, his face shone with the hues of a rainbow. Bright reds the color of blood shaded his eyes, and blues the shade of sky decorated his brow.

Hunting Wolf then decided to practice. Though he was counted skillful among his people, this would be his first large-scale battle. His whirling tomahawk danced in the air and cut the morning's silence. His knife stabbed down his imagined foes. His spear hurled through the crisp morning cold to fill the day with the promise of warm blood. Hunting Wolf loved

it. He sang a Cherokee war song and whirled away at his dance of death even harder.

Hunting Wolf's long black hair whipped about his head as he thought of his wife, Falling Star. The thought of the dark-eyed beauty with her long ebony hair seemed to calm him. Then, he thought of the pale-eyed invaders harming her. His hate increased, and his dance became even more deadly.

The thought of his tribe being forced from their ancestral land made his brow crease with new fury. He hacked and slashed with horrible beauty. Imaginary blood poured from his enemies. The imaginary battle became all he saw. He didn't notice the troop of the pale-faced soldiers marching over his hill. The soldiers stopped at the top of the slope and looked on silently. Hunting Wolf never stopped his war-dance.

*Chris Strawbridge*



Ink Drawing

*Michael Dudley*

### Sorrow

Only a handful of years  
    have ticked from my life;  
But as each one passes,  
    it cuts like a knife.  
For the pain that I feel,  
    the refusal, dismay,  
Is enough to scare even  
    the worst beasts away.  
There's no need to worry,  
    be angry, or cry;  
I'm left in my chamber,  
    on my pallet I lie.  
I've nothing to do  
    but be sorry and think  
About life and the living  
    that I'm missing each week.  
But time must keep ticking,  
    and days must pass by,  
With or without me,  
    until the day that I die.

*Richard Stallworth*



## Holden and Huck: The Search for Consistency, Innocence, and Truth

Celebrating the innocence of youth is a major theme in novels about adolescents. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Catcher in the Rye* are two such novels with adolescents as their main characters. Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield are separated in time by over a hundred years, in place by half a continent, and in age by about two years, but, these differences aside, are very similar. Both Holden Caulfield and Huck Finn make similar journeys to escape the evils of adult society, and both think of themselves as immoral "heathens," when, in fact, they are two young people who are searching for consistency, innocence, and truth.

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* begins with young Huck Finn trying to adjust to "civilization." He dislikes the society in which he lives because of his disinclination toward society's constraints. Huck comments, "When you got to the table you couldn't go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck her head and grumble over the victuals" (Twain 3). Edgar Branch writes, "Huck initially flees conventionalities, constraint, and terror" (206). So Huck goes down the Mississippi River on a raft, hoping to escape the world of adults, including his abusive father. Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye* is disturbed with his life at prep school, where he is failing, and which is, according to Holden, full of "phonies" and "bores." Holden leaves the "stupid constraints of his prep school life" (Branch 207). Instead of escaping to the ever-changing river, Holden escapes to the constantly changing city of New York. Holden, like Huck, believes that he cannot conform to the rules of society, so he leaves it. Holden also escapes from society because "the phoniness of society forces Holden Caulfield to leave it" (Heiserman and Miller 198).

Both characters desire to escape these adult worlds of falsehood and violence, but neither achieves this throughout each story. Huck must battle with a rule of society when he discovers Jim on Jackson Island (Twain 41). He must also deal with deception and violence when the Duke and the Dauphin come aboard the raft (Twain 117). Holden constantly deals with violence and phoniness, such as when he must confront the pimp Maurice (Salinger 132). He always complains of being surrounded by "jerks and phony morons" (Salinger 83). Huck is ultimately able to escape society, at least temporarily, when he "lights out for the territory ahead of the rest" (Twain 281). Holden plans to escape society by living a hermit's life out West, but he is unable to leave because of his love for Phoebe (Branch 207). Since Holden is unable to escape, he has a nervous break-

down and ends up in a California sanitarium.

Huck and Holden leave society for the simple reason that they have different values than those of society. Neither knows whether his values are better or worse than the values of the civilized world. Huck believes himself to be inherently bad, "being brung up to wickedness" (Twain 206). Huck also criticizes himself saying that God wouldn't take him because "he wasn't agoing to be any better off than what he was before, seeing I was so ignorant, and so kind of low-down and ornery" (Twain 13). Charles Kaplan comments, "His personal moral code always seems to run counter to that of society" (79). Holden, more critical of society than Huck, criticizes himself as a "sacrilegious atheist" and a "failure." Holden and Huck could be denounced by society for things they partake in that are "bad." Huck has a couple of "vices," such as smoking and chewing tobacco, and he often "borrows" things from other people. Holden, by far the worse in this area, not only smokes like Huck, but he also drinks, lies sometimes, curses, and is very curious about sexual perversion. These qualities, however, are shown to be typical of most adolescents and adults in society, but Huck and Holden also have good qualities uncommon among these members of society. Edgar Branch writes, "In many important matters . . . Huck and Holden . . . affirm goodness, honesty, and loyalty" (211). Both Huck and Holden love all of humanity, good and bad. Holden even goes so far as to say that he misses Stradlater, Maurice, and Ackley (Salinger 271). Similarly, Huck expresses that he feels sorry for the Duke and the Dauphin when they are tarred and feathered. Holden and Huck are honest in important matters, though they will lie if necessary for survival. Holden is kind to everyone he meets, such as the two nuns in the diner (Salinger 143). Huck helps those in need, such as the three sisters who were being robbed by the Duke and the Dauphin (Twain 172). When confronted with the decision to save Jim or turn him in, Huck risks his soul to save Jim (Twain 206). Holden is infuriated when he sees profanity in an elementary school, because he hates to see small children corrupted. These qualities that Holden and Huck possess are quite uncommon in worlds of violence, falsehood, and apathy.

One of the factors contributing to Huck's and Holden's uncommon qualities is their desire for consistency in a world of change. This desire for an unchanging world also puts them at odds with themselves and society. Holden and Huck do have differences in their desires for consistency, but they are basically the same. Holden desires to be a "catcher in



the rye," where he would be the only adult in a world of children. He would catch children as they fell off the cliff toward the adult world of phoniness. This shows how he wants things to be constant. Holden wants all children to remain unchanged like the exhibits in glass boxes at the Museum of Natural History. He wishes that people could be placed in those glass boxes, for he is discouraged with the fact that every time one goes back to the museum, one has changed, though the exhibits are the same (Salinger 157). Huck's desire to live in a constant world is not as evident as Holden's, but he has many characteristics that show his search is for consistency. It is true that Huck wants to stay on the unpredictable and varying river, but he realizes that it is at least consistently unpredictable. The consistent routine of traveling down the river with Jim where they travel nights, hide during the day, and "borrow" provisions in the evening appeals to Huck greatly. Huck usually chooses to leave things alone, even if he dislikes them, because of his search for consistency. Another reason that Huck wants a constant world is his desire to remain uncivilized and uneducated. He would prefer living on the frontier to "sivilization" because there is no hypocrisy, only nature's unchanging order.

Coupled with Holden's and Huck's searches for consistency is a mutual search for truth and innocence. Holden is always searching for innocence, but all he finds is phoniness. The only person he knows who is still innocent is his sister Phoebe. Phoebe has what Holden had as a child, "non-phoniness, truth, and innocence" (Heiserman and Miller 199). Holden is also fond of the innocence of all children. Holden's search for truth is evident mainly because of his intense displeasure in phonies. He dislikes anything with the slightest hint of falsehood, relying only on certain things he deems as not being phony, such as the timpani drummer or the nuns. Huck also searches for truth and innocence as he travels down the Mississippi, like Holden, avoiding fraudulence and deception. Frederic Carpenter states, "The quality which makes Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield brothers under the skin - and which runs through all the best of these novels - is a common hatred of hypocrisy and a search for integrity" (315). Huck loves the innocence of nature and the innocence of being uncivilized. He sees "sivilization" as having no innocence, but the virgin forests of the frontier offer the innocence he is searching for. Huck has conflicts with the fraudulent Duke and Dauphin because of his search for truth, a quality that they certainly didn't have. Huck left the Grangerfords, though he respected them greatly, because the innocence of rural life had been ruined by a brutal feud. Huck realizes that he is so truthful that he cannot even lie to himself in the chapter entitled, "You can't pray a lie." This com-

mon search for truth and innocence by Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield is a major factor in their similar moral values.

Throughout the novels *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden and Huck show similar characteristics, both internal and external. The plots of the novels, though very different, have similar lines in the escapes that the main characters make. Both stories are sharp criticisms of society, as reflected by how the world treats these two social outcasts who possess atypical qualities of honesty, love, and loyalty. Holden and Huck are both nonconformists, not conforming to society because of its violence, hypocrisy, and falsehood. Huck and Holden both go on a quest for consistency, innocence, and truth, but neither is able to find a substantial number of these qualities in society, though there are times when truth, innocence, and consistency abound. It is tragic that the world represented in these novels does not have enough consistency, truth, and innocence, but the small points of light that Holden Caulfield and Huck Finn give off show that the authors believe that there is still hope for mankind to remain consistent, truthful, and innocent.

Note:

I am indebted to Arthur Heiserman and James E. Miller for the terms "truth" and "innocence" in reference to Holden Caulfield.

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